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The Baby Box

Finland has one of the highest standards of living in the world, but in the early 1900s, it was a very poor country with many social problems. One of these was the high number of babies that died shortly after birth. In fact, every year around 6.5 percent died. Now, Finland has one of the lowest death rates for babies in the world. Many people believe that the main reason for this (26) is the country's policy of giving a free box of essential baby goods to every woman who is going to have a baby.

The box contains clothes, blankets, a mattress, toys, picture books, and other items that the government believes every baby needs. The boxes were first introduced in 1938 for poor mothers. Then, in 1949, they began to be given to all mothers. (27), mothers appreciated the boxes because they helped them to save money. However, Finnish people today are much wealthier and now like them for a different reason. They are very busy, and the boxes help them to save time preparing for the new baby.

The contents of the baby box have changed over time. Sometimes this reflected changes in (28). In the beginning, for example, the boxes contained cloth for making baby clothes. At that time, most mothers made baby clothes themselves. Later, this was changed to ready-made clothes. The boxes have also been used to (29) mother's behavior. In the past, the boxes contained bottles for giving milk to babies, but recent research suggests that it is healthier for babies to drink their mother's milk. To encourage mothers to stop using bottles, the government is no longer putting them in the boxes. Though the boxes have changed, for most Finnish mothers, receiving one remains an essential part of having a baby.

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| 26. | a. cost | b. failure | c. decrease | d. criticism |
| 27. | a. Originally | b. Instead | c. By contrast | d. In short |
| 28. | a. leadership | b. weather | c. diet | d. lifestyle |
| 29. | a. forgive | b. defend | c. punish | d. influence |